

The Author

J. Eric S. Thompson is a Distinguished Archaeologist who was for many years associated with the "Carnegie Institution of Washington." Veteran of many field expeditions to the Maya areas of Mexico and Central America, he has been awarded the "Mexican Order of the Aztec Eagle"; is a Commander of the Spanish Order of "Isabel La Catolica". He is a fellow of the British Academy, and was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Letters by Tulane University in 1972.

He is one of the world's foremost Maya Scholars. Now "retired" he lives near Cambridge, England, where he is working on additional volumes on Maya Hieroglyphics.

Dr. Thompson is also the author of: "Ethnology of the Mayas of Southern and Central British Honduras," (Chicago, 1930) "Archaeological Investigation in the Southern Cayo District, British Honduras, (Chicago, 1931); Excavations of San José, British Honduras," (Washington, 1939); "The Rise and Fall of the Maya Civilization," (Norman, 1954); "Maya Archaeologist," (Norman, 1963); "Maya History and Religion," (Norman, 1970).

Printed in Belize by The Benex Press

THE MAYA OF BELIZE: HISTORICAL CHAPTERS SINCE COLUMBUS



by J. ERIC S. THOMPSON

FOREWORD

A good friend of Belize for many years is Dr. J. Eric Thompson.

His first visit was in 1927, when he joined a British Museum party excavating at Lubaantun in the Toledo District. He also worked at San Jose (Orange Walk District) and in the southern Cayo District. The valuable archaeological data collected on these visits was presented and analysed in two publications, *Archaeological Investigations in the Southern Cayo District, British Honduras* and *Excavations at San Jose, British Honduras*.

Dr. Thompson also wrote, on the basis of his observation of the living Maya in Belize at San Antonio (Toledo District) and San Jose Succotz (Cayo District), the important work *Ethnology of the Mayas of Southern and Central British Honduras*.

His more recent *Maya Archaeologist* also includes accounts of his visits to Belize, the most recent of which was in 1959.

In 1970 Dr. Thompson offered to present to Belize as a gift the manuscript of a work on the Maya of Belize from the 16th to the 19th centuries, and this kind offer was readily accepted.

On that occasion Dr. Thompson wrote: "I have so many pleasurable memories of my younger years in your land, particularly of my time among the Maya of San Antonio Toledo and Socotz, that I would like to show my gratitude by making this little contribution".

Readers of this work would readily agree that it is more than a "little contribution" as far as archaeology is concerned and, indeed, for the Belizean of today the evidence of Maya resistance to aggression in the past may well serve as an inspiration to the Belize of the future.

On behalf of the people and Government of Belize I sincerely thank Dr. Thompson for this valuable contribution.

GEORGE PRICE
Premier

I am grateful to the Hon. George Price, Premier of Belize, for his constant interest in and support of this project; without his encouragement this short history would not have seen the light of day.

I am very happy also to express my indebtedness to Mr. Joseph Palacio, Archaeological Commissioner, for volunteering to undertake the onerous and tedious task of preparing the index and for various helpful criticisms.

The Survey Department, through the Surveyor General, Mr. Karl Gibson, has kindly prepared the map from my scrawled attempts at penmanship.

My old friend, James A. Waight, former Surveyor General, has been very helpful in various geographical matters.

I am much indebted to Mr. A.S. Grant, formerly in charge of the Map Section of the Survey Department, for his interest in the route followed by the early Franciscans in their journeys from the bottom of the New River Lagoon to the Belize River. By a study of aerial photographs, he was able to establish that, contrary to former opinion, one can travel on fairly high ground, free of swamp, via Ramgoat Creek Pine Ridge and Paslow Falls to Banana Bank, on the Old River. In all probability an old Maya trail followed that route and was the one used by the Fathers.

Indeed, without the records of the travels and observations of the early Franciscan and Dominican friars, above all of that "hound of the Lord" Joseph Delgado, this book could not have been written. They were undaunted by the hardships, difficulties and perils which faced them on their long journeys in the now distant past.

Finally, I would mention my Maya friends of forty years ago in Socotz and San Antonio Toledo, above all my compadre, Jacinto Cunil, who inspired me to learn all I could of their forerunners.

J. ERIC S. THOMPSON

June 1972

Ashdon, Saffron Walden,
Essex, England

The Maya Of Belize: Historical Chapters Since Columbus

INTRODUCTION

Forjando patria, forging a fatherland - or motherland, as we say in English - was the need and task the great Mexican patriot and anthropologist Manuel Camio saw facing his country half a century ago. For him - to continue the analogy - it was the need to weld into a national entity the two races which lived in his land. He was right. No land is a nation until it has found its soul; one beacon which lights the road to unity, a prerequisite of nationhood, is pride in its past.

Many peoples have made their contributions to present-day Belize: English logwood cutters, Africans, Spanish-speaking refugees who found a haven here from the perils of Yucatan's War of the Castes, Caribs from the island of Saint Vincent, East Indians, and the Maya, who have been here for well over 2,000 years and the ruins of whose buildings are one of the glories of the country.

In the pages which follow, I have sketched what is known of the Maya living in Belize when they were first brought into contact with the culture of the Old World and its bearers. The ancient history of that people is a matter which does not concern us here.

Two features in that story must be an inspiration to a nation in which Maya blood mingles. First, the constant and largely successful efforts of the Maya of Belize to maintain their independence against great odds, for bows and arrows are even poorer weapons against guns than Poland's cavalry were against Hitler's armoured divisions. However, the Maya had one ad-

vantage the Poles lacked: they could disappear into the forest. Because of that evasive action the Spaniards were never able to overcome them completely in what is now Belize territory. In the Peten the story is different. There, the Spanish forces overwhelmed the Maya, and rounding up the refugees, settled them in towns and villages, thereby exposing them to the many diseases introduced from the Old World; some they forcibly removed to the highlands of Guatemala. In Belize the Maya retained their independence of alien rule, but disease knows no political frontiers, and here too the Maya, having no inbuilt immunity to those new scourges, were largely wiped out.

The second point which emerges from this study is that Belize throughout its known history has been a refuge for the oppressed. In the sixteenth, seventeenth and probably the eighteenth centuries, Maya, unwilling to submit to Spanish rule, moved southward from Yucatan into Belize. Large numbers settled along the New and Belize Rivers, welcomed by the native-born Maya with whom they finally merged. The process was repeated in the nineteenth century with the influx of refugees into the Corozal District from the war of the castes and of Maya from Peten into the western parts of the Cayo and Toledo Districts to escape harassment by the authorities there.

History makes abundantly clear that lands welcoming refugees are well rewarded; the Greeks in western Europe after the fall of Constantinople, the Huguenots in England, the Germans in the U.S.A. in the mid-nineteenth century who left their homeland to escape despotism, and the Jews throughout western Europe and the Americas fleeing from nazism are examples which come instantly to the mind of exiles far more than repaying the lands which gave them welcome.

Our knowledge of the living Maya of Belize, as opposed to what archaeology tells us of their remoter past, comes from eyewitness accounts, largely those of Franciscan and Dominican friars who made various incursions into this unknown and unconquered land, the former from Yucatan, the latter from the Alta Verapaz, in attempts to convert the Maya to Christianity. These were peaceful and short-lived entrances; no Spanish force penetrated Belize before the attempts to dislodge the Baymen in the eighteenth century, nor was there any Spanish settlement within its present frontiers, except, as we will see, for less than two years early in the sixteenth century, and that was ended in short order by the Maya themselves.

The Maya of Belize fell into three groups: Yucatec Maya in the north with their important capital of Chetumal; a loose group I call Chan Maya, with whom Yucatec Maya later mingled, in the centre, extending to the Sittee river and perhaps a little south of it; and the Manche Chol who occupied the Toledo District from the Monkey to the Sarstoon Rivers.

CHETUMAL

The northern part of this great independent Maya province as it existed until the coming of the Spaniards lay in present-day Quintana Roo; the southern part was in Belize, covering the whole country roughly as far south as a line from perhaps Guinea Grass to Northern (ancient Zact'an) River. The language was Yucatec Maya, and in culture the state - for that was what it really was - did not differ significantly from the Maya states of Yucatan and Quintana Roo. It has been widely assumed that its capital of the same name was situated more or less where the present city of Chetumal, formerly Payo Obispo, now stands.

There is, however, very good documentary evidence that it lay near present-day Corozal Town. The best source for that assertion is an account of a journey made of 1618 by two Franciscan friars, Bartolomé de Fuensalida and Juan de Orbita, who journeyed from Bacalar via New River, New River Lagoon and the upper Belize River to the then heathen and independent Itza of Lake Peten, whose capital was Tayasal, present-day Flores.

The original account written by Fr. Fuensalida is lost, but much of it is incorporated in López Cogolludo's *Historia de Yucatán* first published in 1688 (bk. 9, chaps. 4-10), but written some thirty years earlier. The account tells of how the two friars came from Bakhala (Bacalar) by way of a river which must be Chac Creek, then called Noh Ukum, 'Big Water', to the Hondo, and down that to its mouth. The Maya name of the Hondo is not known for certain, but William Miller (Proc. R. Geographical Society 1887) reported Blue Creek as having the Maya name Xnoha (xnoh, 'great'; ha, 'water or river') and this probably once applied to the whole River Hondo.

The story of the journey continues:

"Having come to the sea (i.e. the mouth of the Hondo), they journeyed for about three leagues to reach a farm belonging to a resident of the town (of Bacalar) The site of this farm is where at the time of the (Spanish) conquest of this land was founded the great town of Chetumal. . . . Now there is no more than the memory that it had been situated there. From the farm they went to a town (of Indians) called Uaitibal which used to be near the shore but now is totally depopulated. . . . and from there to the mouth of a river which the Indians call Zuluinicob, which is the same as (saying) of the Spaniards (actually it is Dz'uluinicob and means foreigners, and probably was so named before any Spaniards reached the New World)."

The journal continues with the journey up the New River (the Dz'uluinicob or Dz'uluinic, the singular form) to New River Lagoon and thence across the pine ridge to the Belize River.

From the above it is clear that the site of Chetumal lay between the

Hondo and New Rivers, three leagues from the mouth of the Hondo. In direct line following the coast, Corozal Town is about ten miles from the mouth of the Hondo, so Fuensalida's estimate of about three leagues would place the site of Chetumal a little north of Corozal Town.

The account of Dávila, the Spanish conqueror's advance on Chetumal in 1531 agrees well with the above itinerary. From Bacalar he crossed the lake in canoes, and reached the coast by river. At the point where the river entered the sea, surely the mouth of the Hondo, the Spaniards found a town. Thence they followed the coast for three leagues to reach Chetumal. Obviously, had Chetumal been where the present city of that name stands, he would have travelled overland from the east bank of Bacalar Lagoon.

There is a large Maya site which may well be ancient Chetumal at Santa Rita, a former sugar plantation on the outskirts of Corozal Town. This was partially excavated by Dr. Thomas Gann some seventy years ago. Pottery he found there included types almost duplicates of those found many years later at Mayapan, in Yucatán, and which date from the fifteenth century. Moreover, on frescoes there, also uncovered by Gann, were portraits of Ek Chuah, the Maya merchant god, a patron of the Putun branch of the Maya who are known to have controlled Chetumal at that time. Finds of copper objects at Santa Rita are further confirmation of its importance in the period immediately before the coming of the Spaniards. If Chetumal was not at Santa Rita, it was certainly close by.

The Spanish conquistador, Francisco de Montejo's first attempt to subjugate the peninsula of Yucatan was in 1527-29, and ended in complete disaster; the Spaniards returned with their tails between their legs to the north coast of Honduras. According to the historian Oviedo y Valdéz (bk. 32, ch. 3) Montejo sailed southwards as far as Chetumal, but confined himself to sending a party of Spaniards ashore at night in a pinnace to capture Indians from whom to gather information. Without further effort he continued his journey southwards.

Two years later Alonso Dávila, Montejo's second in command, moving inland from Campeche, marched northeastward, and then swung southward to Bacalar, which may have been on the east side of the lake, not on the west side as it now is. Thence, as already noted, he advanced in canoes down Lake Bacalar and by river (the River Chac) to the mouth of the Hondo. Another three leagues brought him to Chetumal which he found abandoned, and there he founded a town which he named Villa Real.

The lack of opposition by the chief ruler of Chetumal was not because of lack of will to resist the Spanish invaders, but because the Maya had learned that in open battle they could not hope to win against the Spaniards' firearms and calvary; the best tactics were to avoid set battles, but harry the enemy with guerrilla warfare. In answer to Dávila's summons to submit to Spain, the chief ruler disdainfully replied that he did not desire peace, and that the tribute he would pay would be turkeys in the shape

of spears and maize in the shape of arrows.

Thus, over 450 years ago those Maya inhabitants of what is now Belize determined in the face of the then most powerful nation in the world to fight and die for their liberty; their fight was successful. Their courage must always be an inspiration to the land which gave them birth.

The chief ruler of Chetumal in his campaign of resistance had the help of a remarkable man, Gonzalo Guerrero, a renegade Spaniard. Gonzalo, with other Spaniards, had been shipwrecked in 1511 south of Jamaica. After a sea voyage of thirteen days, about thirteen survivors reached the east coast of the Peninsula of Yucatán. Five of the Spaniards were immediately sacrificed by the Maya, but the remainder succeeded in escaping. By the time Cortés reached Yucatán only two of the castaways, a certain Geronimo de Aguilar and Guerrero, were still alive. Cortés sent messages to both to come to him; Aguilar reponded and became interpreter for Cortés, but Guerrero, refused the offer, giving as excuse that he was not a free man; but Aguilar surmised that he was ashamed to come because he had his nose and ears pierced and his face and hands tattooed Maya style, and that he had a Maya wife and children. By the time Dávila seized Chetumal, Guerrero had risen to be military adviser to Nachan Can, its chief ruler; it was probably on his advice that the guerilla tactics were adopted. One may also say that he was the first European resident of Belize, and one who fought for his adopted land.

Two months after his arrival at Chetumal, Dávila learned that Nachan Can was preparing to attack him from his base at a town called Chequitaquil (*Checetikil*, Innumerable Vine-like Plants?) three or four leagues up coast. Since the Spaniards, on attacking him, journeyed by canoe, one supposes that this town was somewhere not far north of the modern city of Chetumal; canoes were necessary to avoid the swamps beyond the River Hondo. Dávila won the battle, but Nachan Can slipped away, as did Guerrero if, as is probable, he was also present. The Spaniards returned to Chetumal falsely believing their victory was a great one.

A fresh campaign into what is now southern Quintana Roo brought apparent successes and feigned submissions, but Dávila realized he was getting nowhere. Moreover, his attempt to contact Montejo at Campeche failed; the six Spanish soldiers he sent with dispatches were killed by the Maya.

Other Maya states had allied themselves with Chetumal, and to all intents and purposes, Dávila was besieged in the city of Chetumal he had proudly renamed Villa Real. As Oviedo y Valdés, who got his material from one of Dávila's lieutenants, wrote:

"As the maize and other food supplies were used up and the Christians were so few, the Indians lost their fear of them and began to make war on them to such an extent that forced by their

extreme need they (the Spaniards) began to make sowings of crops within the town with their own hands and with their own sweat with the help of just a few submissive Indians who served them as domestics in their houses. The continuity of war was such that these settlers of the company of Second in Command Alonso Dávila totalled only forty men and of those ten were useless, being maimed in arms or legs, as well as four horses and one mare."

In fact, more men were subsequently lost in a clash with two hundred Maya in canoes who came down what was probably New River.

Late in 1532, after about eighteen months' occupation, Dávila decided to evacuate Chetumal and make his way down the coast to Honduras. This he did, pursued by the victorious Maya of Chetumal for twelve hours, but with their firearms the Spaniards were able to hold off their pursuers, and continued on their perilous voyage fraught with every hardship along the coast of Belize.

Thirteen years later, in 1545, the ruthless Pacheco family waged a campaign against the Maya of Chetumal and adjacent states to the north of unparalleled cruelty, the details of which, when they became known, filled all right-minded Spaniards with horror. The state of Chetumal was submerged in a sea of blood. Many of the Maya, men and women, were garrotted or thrown into lakes with weights tied to them; others had hands, ears or noses chopped off; still others were torn to pieces by savage "dogs of war". Many more died of hunger for no crops could be sown.

After this barbaric conquest, the Spaniards founded the town of Bacalar on the west side of the lake (the old Maya town seems to have been on the east side), but no serious attempt was made to hold the part of Chetumal state (including Chetumal town) within present-day Belize. It became a place of refuge for Maya escaping from Spanish rule.

Chetumal was a wealthy state because of the large production of cacao from orchards on the New and Hondo Rivers and a huge output of honey from many thousands of log hives such as the Maya still use. Cacao beans formed the currency of the Maya and all other peoples of Middle America — in fact, they continued to serve that purpose in remoter parts of Central America until almost the beginning of this century.

Thus the Maya of Chetumal were coining money, or, if you prefer, they had learned the trick of making money grow on trees. Chetumal itself was an important commercial port on the ancient trade route which encircled the peninsula of Yucatán. The great Maya trading canoes carrying up to fifty persons journeyed from Xicalango, on the southern arm of land enclosing the Bahía de Términos, stopping to trade all along the route, to the northern coast of Honduras. Columbus described one such canoe which he encountered off the Bay Islands, and which had probably called at Chetumal on the last stretch of its journey to Naco in what is now northern Honduras.

One imagines those merchants, in all likelihood Putun Maya from Tabasco, trading their products brought from Central Mexico with the Maya of Belize and haggling over how many copper axes or turquoise beads a load of cacao beans was worth. In those days neither grapefruit nor bananas grew in Belize. In fact, the Putun Maya seem in those days to have had some sort of control over Chetumal, presumably realizing, as the great sea traders of Central America, its importance in the cacao trade and in the export of honey which took the place of sugar, unknown in America before Columbus' day.

Returning to the story of the ignominious flight of Dávila from Chetumal, the depleted Spanish force in stolen canoes, some of which were lashed together in pairs to carry the few surviving horses, had a long and dangerous journey along the coast of what is now Belize. Off-shore morning winds drove them far out to sea so that at times they were almost out of sight of the unknown land, but each afternoon inshore winds brought them back so that they could camp on land. The food they had brought, although they supplemented it with fishing, soon gave out. In desperation, parties raided villages inland in search of provisions while the rest of the party remained at the shore to mend canoes and fish nets.

While on one such raid up a river, perhaps the Belize, the water rose so rapidly in flood that it forced the Spaniards to climb trees, from which, helpless, they watched their canoes swept out to sea. Finally, the weary survivors reached the Golfo Dulce.

CENTRAL BELIZE

The Maya of the Belize valley and as far south as the Sitté belonged to a large group which in speech differed little from the Maya of Yucatán, but which in political organization, and probably religion, had a distinct entity. With the exception of those around Lake Peten under the domination of the Itza intruders, an alien minority which had been able to impose an organized state ruled by a small aristocracy, such as existed in Yucatán. original home of the Itza, these Maya had no political unit greater than each village with the hamlets and small settlements around it and dependent on it.

All these independent and unorganized Maya occupied a large region bounded on the north by a line running approximately from Lake Cilvituk in Central Campeche to the Bay of Honduras and probably crossing New River about Guinea Grass. On the south, the boundary probably ran from the middle reaches of the Usumacinta River to a little south of the Sitté River. South of them were the Chol Maya, of different speech. They had no common name, the chief of each village giving his name to those under his control.

Along the Mopan River one name used for them was the Muzul; in southeastern Peten, perhaps from San Luis to Dolores, and probably in adjacent parts of Belize, they were called Mopan. In the west the region they

inhabited south of Lake Cilvituk was called Cehach (Abundance of Deer), and that name was sometimes applied to the Indians. In fact, the Maya there were independent groups; one was known as the Chan. Southeast of them the group was called Itza from the name of the minority which had come from Yucatán and ruled them.

This loose group lacks a common name. As a geographical or cultural name is hard to coin, for it should be short, I propose using the term Chan Maya. *Chan* in Maya means fine or valiant, and so the title is a compliment to those courageous men who held out so long against Spanish rule. Moreover, Chan was a common surname throughout the region. On the west, as we have seen, it was applied to a group living in Cehach; on the east, it was the commonest name in the upper Belize valley. At Tipu, for instance, there were more people called Chan than by any other name, and two other towns south of the Belize River were under chiefs of that same name. However, it must be emphasized that they were in no sense a nation. Indeed, even the language and personal names varied; the farther from Yucatán, the greater the difference in language and names.

The Chan of what is now Belizean territory from the upper reaches of New River to somewhere between the Sittee and Monkey Rivers, remained independent throughout almost the full length of their history. Their only direct contact with Spanish rule was when the governor of Bacalar spent a few days in Tipu in 1695, when plans were afoot for negotiating the surrender of the Itza in what is now Flores, Peten. Practically all our information on those Maya comes from Franciscan and Dominican friars.

The visit of Friars Fuensalida and Orbita to the former site of Chetumal has been mentioned. From there they entered New River, on the banks of which stood the villages of Puncuy (Arched Ankle), Zonauil and Holpatin. On the shores of New River Lagoon stood Lamanay (Drowned Bug), sometimes, but probably incorrectly written Lamayna (in all likelihood the present-day Indian Church), where indeed, the remains of a church stood until recent times. Crossing New River Lagoon, they disembarked at a landing place called Colmots at the bottom of the lagoon, almost certainly at its southeast edge opposite Hill Bank.

Fuensalida describes New River Lagoon with its many turtles and fish, but its plagues of mosquitoes, and the pine ridge - three leagues long, he says - which they traversed after disembarking. A journey of six leagues brought them to a river called the Cancanilla, which without doubt is Labouring Creek. This they crossed by a natural stone bridge with water only halfway up their legs, as it was in the dry season; the main body of the water passed below over some rapids with a roar audible a league away. (1) This was the halfway point; another six leagues brought the party to a town called Lucu, "which is on the bank of the river, which comes from Tepu". That is to say it was on the Belize River, anciently called the Tipu River, probably about the locality of Never Delay, Mount Pleasant or Orange Walk (Cayo District).

There the Maya gave the friars a happy welcome. Fr. Fuensalida remarks what fine canoemen they were, first-rate pilots and very clever paddlers, and this was because they were brought up to that work from childhood. The annatto there was the finest in all New Spain, many orchards of cacao of a rather reddish variety were along the river banks, and there was a good crop of sweet-smelling vanilla to add to the attractions of the country. Turtles and fish of the kind called *bobo*, which was very tasty, abounded.

The friar adds that to reach Tipu (he calls it Tepu), one had to travel up stream twelve leagues. The force of the water was such that oars (he means paddles) did not suffice; one had to use poles and with the slightest carelessness the water swept the canoe back, and frequently the Indians threw themselves overboard so as to haul the canoes by hand. The journey was very hard work for there were one hundred and ninety rapids in those twelve leagues, and the Indians had their names for each one of them. That description of the Belize River would apply as well today as when Frs. Fuensalida and Orbita ascended the river in A.D. 1618.

1. *Using aerial photographs, Mr. A. S. Grant of the Survey Department worked out the old trail the padres must have followed from the bottom of New River Lagoon to the Belize River. To avoid swamps this would have traversed Ram Goat Creek Pine Ridge due south to Labouring Creek. Then, following the stream, west-southwest to Paslow Falls, believed to be the crossing described by Fr Fuensalida. Thence, as Mr. Grant shows, the trail, following high ground, would have run south-southeast to reach the Belize River perhaps near Never Delay or perhaps a little more upstream near Banana Bank.*

In three days, overcoming the difficulties of the journey, the friars reached Tipu. The cacique and other principals of the town had paddled two leagues down stream to meet them. I think Tipu must have been on the Eastern Branch (the Macal River) perhaps about where Macaw Bank now stands. On their subsequent journey to Lake Peten, the padres, en route to Lake Yaxha, travelled two leagues from Tipu to reach a wide river, which surely can have been no other than the Western Branch (the Mopan River), presumably between Benque Viejo del Carmen and Arenal. Tipu probably should be Ti Puh (Place of Cattail Rushes).

The people of Tipu, a mixture of the local Chan Indians and refugees from Yucatan and Quintana Roo who had infiltrated the whole region, were nominally Christians, but the nearest Catholic priest was at Bacalar, at least ten days' hard travel away, and the Maya were constantly relapsing into paganism, or rather amalgamating Christianity with paganism.

A year later, that is 1619, Fr. Orbita found the whole town was secretly practising idolatry; so many idols were discovered that they could

ly *Never Delay* and *Duck Run* are mentioned in these early sources but cannot be precisely located. They are *Chantome*, *Zaczuc*, *Lucu* (or *Luku*), *Mazanabau*, *Zaca'an* and *Petenzub*. The important town of *Zau* with its *Muzul* chief probably lay downstream from *Never Delay* for it was a day and a half by road from *Tipu*.

The *Tipu* *matricula* (census) begins with the statement by Captain Francisco Pérez: "Today, November 6th, 1655, in this town of *Chunukum* I reduced, congregated and collected all the Indians who are in the *matricula* so that I could take it to Lord Governor and Captain General as I was ordered and commanded." *Chunukum* means in Maya at the base or foot of the river or swamp (*Noh Ukum* - *noh* is big - is the Maya name for the *Chac* River, as already noted). As the large majority of the Indians in the census were from *Tipu* with smaller numbers from *Zaca'an* and *Zaczuc*, both downstream from *Tipu*, it is a fair assumption that *Chunukum* was near *Tipu* (located on Eastern Branch, probably near *Macaw Bank*, p. 18). It probably some way down stream for the convenience of the people of *Zaca'an* and *Zaczuc*.

The González map of 1766 in the British Museum gives the name *Estero Chuncum* (sic) to an important affluent of the Belize River, opposite *Spanish Creek* (written delightfully *Yspaniscrik* and shown flowing into the Belize near present-day *Orange Walk*). *Estero Chuncum* seems to extend south-southwest to the latitude of the bottom of the Bay of Honduras and *Golfo Dulce*. Clearly, this can only be *Western Branch*. It is therefore, a fair guess that the town of *Chuncum* was on *Western Branch* (*Mopan River*), probably close to *Branch Mouth* and so quite near present-day *San Ignacio*.

Twelve adults and five children are listed under *Mayapan* with no indication whether there was a village of that name near *Tipu* or whether they had moved from such a village to *Tipu*; the number rather suggests a small village. *Mayapan* appears in a list, dated 1582, of towns in the spiritual care of the priest at *Bacalar*, but as the list includes places close to *Bacalar* as well as *Tipu*, towns on *New River* and even *Sibun*, it could be anywhere. It is a pleasant thought that a Maya village in Belize, perhaps in the direction of *Yalbac*, *San Jose* or *Kaxil Uinic*, commemorated the great walled capital of *Yucatán*; the evidence, alas!, is weak.

The cacique of *Hubelna* was friendly enough, but most of the Indians there were in a very different mood and they were supported by others who had come from *Tipu*. Presumably to express their defiance of everything Spanish, a pagan priest performed a mock mass, using tortillas and posole for the bread and wine of the mass. Naturally, Fr. Fuensalida and his companion were horrified. Their reaction was to read to the Maya letters they had brought from *Merida* calling on the Indians to surrender to the civil and ecclesiastical authorities. The Indians were solemnly promised that their acts of disobedience to the Spanish authorities and their debts to Spaniards would be forgiven, and that provided they submitted themselves

to Spanish rule, they would not have to pay tribute for the next four years.

Such words to the independent Maya of the upper Belize valley, far beyond Spanish jurisdiction, were about the same as if George III of Great Britain had told George Washington after the *Yorktown* surrender that if he would kindly submit to British rule, he and the rest of the people in the thirteen colonies would not have to pay the excise tax on tea for the next four years.

Philip IV, so familiar to us thanks to Velásquez' portraits, was on the throne of Spain, but he meant nothing to the Maya of *Tipu* who desired no contacts with Spain. Fr. Fuensalida might have saved his breath to cool his porridge, as the expression goes. Those offers of four years exemption from tribute were more than the Maya could stomach. One by one they left the room until at last Fr. Fuensalida's audience was reduced to his fellow friar and a Yucatec Maya, *Lázaro Pech*. Outside, resentment among the Maya boiled up, but did not show itself until next morning.

Then, perhaps when the morning star was first visible in the east, the Indians advanced to where Frs. Fuensalida and Estrada and the faithful *Lázaro Pech* were asleep. In front came many youths blowing conch shell trumpets, a signal for battle; behind were the Maya war captains and behind other Indians, apparently members of the old nobility, armed with short spears. Ranks of warriors with bows and arrows brought up the rear. All were painted like the very hounds of hell, and not one was recognizable beneath his fierce guise. They surrounded the hut in which the two Franciscans and *Lázaro Pech* had passed the night.

A party entered and throwing the two friars and *Lázaro* to the ground, they tied their hands behind their backs. Threatening to kill them forthwith, they shouted amid many injurious words, "Let the Governor (of *Yucatán*) come; let the king come; let the Spaniards come. We are here to fight them. Go and tell them that." Others called out to kill Fr. Fuensalida because he and Fr. *Orbita* had smashed the idol *Tzimin Chac*. That had happened twenty-three years earlier in the expedition of 1618 to *Tayasal*, but the fact that the Maya of *Tipu* and *Hubelna* recalled the incident reveals how essentially pagan the Maya of the upper Belize valley had remained and how close they were to their fellow Maya of the *Peten*.

The angry Indians smashed the images of the friars and a crucifix they held in particular respect. Finally, they untied the two friars and *Pech* and drove them out of the village with shouts and whistles as "a bull is brought into a bull ring", insults, grimaces, putting their fingers in their mouths and abuse of every kind beyond belief. Armed Indians escorted them to *Zaczuc*, whence with great difficulty they eventually made their way back to *Bacalar*.

The cries of defiance of the King of Spain, the Governor and all Spaniards make plain that the threats to their independence contained in the letters read by Fuensalida had brought the Maya to the verge of massacring the small party. How long *Tipu* and the upper Belize valley remained free

of Spanish interference is not known; Spanish sources have almost nothing to say about the area for the next half century, until in 1695-1696 Tipu again came briefly into the limelight, serving once more as a point of contact for negotiators trying to arrange the peaceful surrender of the Itza in Tayasal.

The nephew of Canek, the Itza ruler, spent some time in Tipu on his way to Merida to discuss submission to Spanish rule. There he was joined by two Maya of the Muzul group, heathen neighbours of the people of Tipu about whom very little is known.

The one piece of information on the upper Belize valley in the second half of the seventeenth century is a *matricula* or list made in November 1655 of Indians rounded up by a certain Captain Francisco Pérez by order of the Governor of Yucatan. This document was found by Dr. France Scholes in the Mexican National Archives.

The most interesting feature in this census report is that a number of the inhabitants of Tipu and others from there who had fled to the forests had the names (but not the numbers) of Maya days prefixed to their regular names, for example, Chuen Caan and Ix Caban Mo. Naming a child with the name and number of the day on which it was born was a practice among Maya of the highlands of Guatemala, as well as among the Mixtec and other peoples of the Mexican plateau, but quite unknown in Yucatan. However, there are rare instances of the custom among the Putun Maya. Accordingly, one may speculate that it was a custom which set the Chan Maya aside from the Yucatec Maya.

The fact that the day names at Tipu are divorced from numbers may be because of the partial collapse of the system in the century since the Spanish conquest isolated those Chan Maya in their scattered points of refuge in the forest. Moreover, these day names are evidence that Tipu was not just a refuge centre for Maya fleeing Spanish rule in Yucatán or Quintana Roo; no christianized Maya ever kept day names, and no Christian Maya, even though they might apostatise, ever dropped their baptismal names. Clearly, then, there was an original Maya strain, of the group I call Chan, in the upper Belize valley before refugees from the north drifted into the area.

After the conquest of the Itza of Lake Peten by the Spaniards in 1697, little is heard of Tipu and other villages of the region except that in 1754 Spaniards operating from the Peten made one of those sweeps they constantly tried to round up Maya who had fled beyond their control or had never submitted to it. On this occasion they forcibly removed to Dolores, Peten, the Muzul living near Tipu.

I suspect these were formerly settled in the area between Eastern Branch and Lake Yaxha (conceivably the ruins of Topoxte island in that lake mark their pre-conquest "capital") but a town somewhere on the mid-

dle reaches of the Belize River called Zauil had a chief called Muzul at a somewhat earlier date. Muzul is a rare Maya name, but seems to have been used loosely to refer to the Maya of central Belize, for the Maya settled on the Sittee River are also designated Muzul.

Distrust of the Spaniards caused the Maya of central Belize to become friendly with the British logwood cutters just as they had done in "the Bay of Campeachy" (around Términos Bay) in the seventeenth century, as Dampier recounted. The Bayman map, published in London in 1787, carries in bold lettering across the upper reaches of the Belize River the words "Indios bravos in friendship with the Baymen", an undoubted reference to the Chan Maya of that region. However, nineteenth-century expansion of mahogany cutting, particularly in the western area, may have encroached on Maya milpa lands. Yet the friction thus produced would have been relatively mild; the Baymen had no desire to extract tribute or gather the Maya into large settlements for the purpose of indoctrination, the chief causes of Maya resentment.

In the north and northwest, conflicts outside Belize gave rise to serious troubles. Yucatan was devastated by the sanguinary Maya revolts which broke out in 1847 and continued for decades. After the fighting had become a stalemate, two of the Maya groups, those of Chichanha and Xkanha, made peace with the Mexican authorities. This enraged the intransigent Santa Cruz Maya who attacked and overwhelmed Chichanha for betraying the cause. The survivors moved south to Icaiche, west of the Rio Hondo (the writer has seen the skulls of those slaughtered over a century ago in the now forest-covered ruins of Chichanha).

Merchants of Belize traded freely with the Santa Cruz Maya and by supplying them with arms and gunpowder undoubtedly prolonged the revolt. They also paid rent for lumber concessions in Santa Cruz territory and offered ransom for Yucatec prisoners held by the Santa Cruz Maya. The Icaicha Maya, angered at this arming of their enemies and jealous of the payments made them, decided to take action. Between 1864 and 1867 they raided mahogany works operated by Belize firms on the west bank of the Hondo and on the Booth and Bravo Rivers. The trouble was that the Booth and Bravo Rivers were outside Mexican territory, although the boundary had not then been delimited. Quam Hill was attacked, two men were killed and 79 men, women and children held for ransom of \$12,000, although the Icaiche leader, Marcos Canul, and his men settled for \$3,000.

This and other payments (earlier hostages had been taken at San Roman) whetted the appetites of the Icaiche Maya. Canul moved southward as far as the Maya village of San Pedro, only eight miles in direct line north of Mount Hope on the Belize River. Meanwhile, he had gained the support of the Maya of San Jose and of San Pedro, the latter under their chief Asuncion Ek, and perhaps of other villages.

Just before Christmas of the same year of 1866, Major Mackay and

forty-two men of the 4th West India Regiment set out from Orange Walk, Old River, as escort to a Mr. Rhys, who had been commissioned to treat with Canul, undoubtedly because he himself was part Maya. Close to San Pedro the force was attacked and ignominiously defeated by Canul. Mr. Rhys was among those killed.

Canul followed up this success by capturing Indian Church and demanding more money. In February, when Canul and his men returned to Icaiche, without doubt to make their milpas, a large force of the West India Regiment burned San Pedro, and captured San José with the loss of three wounded. In the village were found equipment of the force which had escorted Mr. Rhys to San Pedro and booty from Indian Church, evidence of San José's complicity in the attack.

Various explanations can be advanced for those Maya villages supporting Canul (if the villagers gave their reasons, they were not recorded): Canul was victorious and a winner can count on support, particularly if, as in this case, he was of one's own race and tongue; by joining him one could expect future loot, whereas failure to join might bring upon one the vengeance of the Icaiche; the idea of driving non-Maya from the peninsula was still alive and may have been an influence; lastly, encroachments by British and Creole lumbermen - and the day that these were purely European was long past - may have been a factor. There were certainly bad feelings which flared whenever Maya milpa lands were endangered (the authorities in Belize seemingly sold or rented crown lands to a lumber operator without trying to find out - by no means always an easy task - whether there was already a Maya settlement on the land). That could well have been an important factor in influencing villages, notably San Pedro, to join Canul. As the Commissioner of Archaeology in Belize, Mr. Joseph Palacio, has perspicaciously indicated to me, this would constitute another example of the Maya fighting for their freedom.

In 1868 Marcos Canul and his Icaiche forces marched unchecked in military array from the Hondo via Orange Walk to Corozal. He repeated this march in 1870, demanding \$3,000. In 1872, he and about 150 of his men crossed the Hondo near Corozalito and attacked Orange Walk. The attack was repulsed and Canul slain. Three weeks later Icaiche Indians appeared at San Antonio, saying that Canul was dead and they desired peace. Their new leader was yet another Chan - Rafael Chan. Except for a flare-up in 1879-1882, things were peaceful after that on the Hondo border.

In 1933, all the inhabitants of once warlike Icaiche, numbering only seventy, moved to Botes, on the Rio Hondo, where three years later the writer briefly met them. Their leader was no longer a warrior, but the village schoolmaster.

The Maya of such towns as San Pedro, Yalbac, El Chorro, San Francisco (between Mount Hope and Orange Walk, Belize River), San Ignacio

(El Cayo), Bullet Tree Falls and San Antonio (Cayo District, moved thither from Barton Creek in 1877) are, or were, without much doubt descendants of those same Chan Maya of the Upper Belize drainage who so long resisted Spanish encroachment, and those of San José, Kaxil Uinic, etc. probably form part of the same group. It is sad that so many no longer exist.

Benque Viejo, Sucotz and Arenal were settled in the 1860's by Maya refugees from the Peten. Miss Marcella Mazzarelli found from inspection of marriage records at Benque Viejo that most of these had moved first from Yucatán into the Peten, but some were born in the Peten and so were presumably Chan. Indeed, Sucotz is a tree name in the Peten, unreported I believe, in Yucatán. Probably there were also other Maya from neighbouring villages in Belize.

In not a few cases Maya villages lost their identity and their native language, and their inhabitants were absorbed into the culture of their non-Maya neighbours. That happened, for example, in Benque Viejo del Carmen in the first two decades of this century; I suspect it happened somewhat earlier at San Ignacio. Incidentally, the alcalde of Benque Viejo del Carmen at the time of Henry Fowler's visit in 1879, soon after the town was settled, bore the name of Chan - Justo Chan.

Of the Maya of the central coast of Belize in the sixteenth to eighteenth century very little is known. In 1641, when Tipu and the Maya of the upper Belize River were in revolt, Franciscan resettled the old town of Zoite, that is Sittee, on the river of the same name, and an unlocated place called Cehake.

The Indians - they are called Muzul in one document, that is they were of the same group as those of Tipu - surrendered a very large quantity of pottery and stone idols of what were described as abominable figures to mark their forsaking of paganism, and these were burned. Nevertheless, the two settlements got off to a poor start, for that same year a Dutch corsair sacked both, although there can have been little to loot except pitiful supplies of food for each family. One suspects that some reluctantly converted pagans attributed the sacking of their town to vengeance by their burned idols.

The Sittee River marked the approximate southern boundary of the Chan Maya along the coast; south of them we encounter Maya of another linguistic stock, the Manche Chol.

MANCHE CHOL MAYA

Chol is the term applied to the Maya languages spoken at the time of the Spanish conquest across the base of the peninsula of Yucatán from Chiapas to the Bay of Honduras. The two main divisions are known respectively as Palencano Chol and Manche Chol, the first referring to the speech

then and still today current in the neighbourhood of the great Maya ruins of Palenque, Chiapas; the second, to the now extinct language formerly spoken in southeast Peten, northeastern Alta Verapaz, around the Golfo Dulce, in the lower Motagua valley, and in Belize from Monkey River to the Sarstoon. Manche Chol takes its name from a small town, San Miguel Manche, perhaps about ten miles south of San Luis, Peten, in which Dominican missionaries working among the heathen Chol of that region concentrated their converts.

Intermittently all through the seventeenth century Dominican friars, operating from Coban, Alta Verapaz, with Cajabon as their advanced base, sought with indifferent success to convert the Manche Chol of south-eastern Peten (those of Lake Izabal, the Golfo Dulce and the lower Motagua were wiped out by newly introduced diseases, notably malaria). As soon as things seemed to be going well, the converted Chol would burn the towns in which the friars had concentrated them, and slip off into the least accessible forest.

Their quarrel seems to have been, not with Christianity, but with Spanish rule and attempts made to impose payment of tribute on them. The friars made the Maya abandon the hamlets scattered through the forest to which they were accustomed and concentrated them in towns so as to be able to catechise them more easily, but-and this the Maya knew-once settled in towns they could not avoid payment of tribute.

Not having been assessed for tribute in their heathen days, they did not relish being taxed and generally pushed around by those alien invaders. This musical chairs of conversion and apostasy continued until the determined and successful drive in 1696-97, with one army moving southward from Campeche and the other northward from Cajabon, crushed the Itza and established Spanish rule throughout the Peten. At that time such of the Manche Chol as could be caught were shipped off to the highlands of Guatemala; those who escaped were for the most part wiped out by diseases.

The easternmost of the converted and settled Manche Chol were in the large town of San Lucas Tz'alac, close to the Garcias a Dios rapids on the Sarstoon River and the quite small settlement of Santa Catarina Puzilha apparently about midway between the Pusilha marked on the Urrutia map of Guatemala and the archaeological ruins of the same name at the junction of the Hobente and Pusilha Rivers to form the Moho River. Thus the Manche Chol settlements in what is now Belize were outside the mission territory of the Dominicans. However, there are scraps of information on abortive attempts to reduce the Chol Maya of coastal Belize, one of whose most important centres was Campin.

As early as 1574 we have a report that fifty households of Indians brought from Campin and Yahal (probably on the Yaxal (Moho) river as sometimes stood for an aspirated *h* sound in Spanish) had been settled at San Mateo Xocoloc, an Indian town on the north side of Lake Izabal, but because of ill treatment they had fled back into the forest. No doubt those

of Campin managed to get back to their old homes, but they certainly would not have brought reports likely to impress those who had escaped capture of the advantages of Spanish rule. From evidence to be presented later, it is highly probable that the Campin river is the present Monkey River. Fr. Martín Tejero, one of the Franciscans who refounded Zoite (Sittee) visited Campin briefly that same year. He remarked that the Indians there spoke a language different from that of Sittee, which, of course, was a dialect of Yucatec Maya. Luckily, the cacique of Zoite (Sittee) understood the Campin language, which was Manche Chol. An exchange of messages ended in an invitation to the friars to visit the town. From Zoite to the mouth of the Campin river was said to have been 40 leagues by sea, but 20 leagues by land over difficult uninhabited country. The estimate by sea is a gross exaggeration.

The trip was made in October, at the height of the rains, and it took the Indians two days to get their visitors from the mouth of the Campin to their settlement. There were many rapids and the Indians drew the canoe up stream hauling on branches against the current; the return journey was of less than three hours. The country was filled with very large pines and intersected with streams. At the back of the little settlement was a very high mountain, and behind that there was a larger settlement of the same group of Indians. Whether the name Campin refers to the first settlement or the second is not clear, probably the second. Cowpen, on the Swasey branch of Monkey River, sounds quite a lot like Campin (pronounced in Maya *Cabpeen*) and one wonders whether that can be an ancient anglicized version of Campin developed by logwood cutters just as Sibun and Sittee have come down from Maya Xibun and Zoite.

Attempts to restore Campin to Christianity failed because of fresh incursions of corsairs.

A river which almost certainly corresponds to the Rio Grande was the Paliaka (the Jeffrey map of 1775 has Palacca or Peliack). Probably Palyak was the name of the settlement; the *a* added at the end almost certainly corresponds to *ha*, water, which often loses its aspirate when it follows a consonant, and so Palyaka was the river. In an extremely rare book *Informe del Procurador General Francisco de Ayeta; Defensa de la verdad. Informe y memorial presentado al rey, año de 1687*, it is stated that in 1684 three Franciscans, Fr. Francisco Custodio, a certain Fr. Muros, and an unnamed lay brother, and some Spaniards were martyred, presumably sacrificed by the old Maya method of tearing out the heart, at Paliac, while endeavouring to convert the Indians to Christianity.

Independent confirmation of this report brought by a mulatto who had been in the forest, has not been secured, but I see no reason to doubt the statement. Two of the friars are named, and Palyak was a place the very existence of which was known to only a handful of non-Indians; both details vouch for the veracity of the informant. The pertinent material is

in Francisco Vázquez (bk. 4, ch. 79). Thus Belize has its own martyrs of the Christian faith.

In the closing decades of the eighteenth century, Spaniards in Yucatán and Guatemala were anxious to open an overland route connecting their territories. Sea traffic was at the mercy of corsairs, who infested both coasts of the Peninsula of Yucatán; the Itza of Lake Peten and surrounding territories appeared to bar a direct land route.

In 1677 the Dominican Fr. Joseph Delgado, bearing dispatches for the Governor of Yucatán, was sent to find an alternative land route, from the Christianized settlements of the Manche Chol via Mopan to Tipu and thence to Bacalar and on to Merida. That would have meant following almost the present-day border between Belize and Guatemala from Gracias a Díos to Garbutt's Falls, perhaps a few miles within Guatemalan territory for most of the distance.

Fr. Delgado set out from Cajabon and finally reached Merida after many tribulations, the chief of which was falling into the hands of English corsairs under the command of the famous Bartholomew Sharpe. Delgado left four different memoranda on his journey, and it is not easy to reconcile their variations. Details below derive principally from the first memorandum prepared probably on the Moho River on June 6, 1677, and the second written when he reached Bacalar after being freed by Sharpe, and which bears the date September 26, 1677.

The originals are now in the National Library, Paris; they were quoted extensively by the Guatemalan historian Ximénez and the Spanish chronicler Villagutierre y Sotomayor, and there are English translations by Ethel-Jane W. Bunting (1932) and Doris Zemurray Stone (1932). Spellings of names are not easily made out. Below I give a fresh translation omitting data which do not pertain to Belize. Comment is in brackets. Distances are highly exaggerated. A league probably equals an hour's walking, but at that Fr. Delgado claims to have covered 39 leagues in four days.

MEMORANDUM ON THE SETTLEMENTS AND RIVERS WHICH THERE ARE FROM THE TOWN OF SAN MIGUEL MANCHE TO THE AHIZA INDIANS. THE ROAD AND INDIANS. JUNE 7, 1677.

From El Manche to the *rancheria* (group of huts) of an Indian called Bol there are 4 leagues.

From here to another called Marco Zibak there are another 4 leagues.

From here to another, the Indian is called Juan Petz, there are 5 leagues.

And to reach this *rancheria* one twice passes over the dangerous and large River Yaxal (Blue-green); the first time I crossed by a bridge formed of a tree trunk (*madero*), the second I crossed by wading,

supporting myself by means of some rocks of a waterfall which the river has. It also has many waterfalls and very swift rapids, but with care and in time of floods one can cross and travel in canoe or pirogue. At Juan Petz's home the Yaxal River is called Puzilha because in times passed there was a town there called Santa Catarina Puzilha.

I started off from the house of Juan Petz and arrived to (where) I slept in the forest near a stream called the Conconha; there are 7 to 8 leagues.

From here I set forth and stopped to eat at another river called Latetum; there are 4 leagues. From here I started and reached another *rancheria* of some Indians called Pach; their chief is called Vicente Pach; 4 more leagues.

From here I set out and arrived in time to eat at the bank of the Yaxal (Moho) River. There are 5 leagues. To get to this settlement (*paraje*) one again crosses the Yaxal River by a wooden bridge. From here I set out and reached *rancheria* of an Indian called Martin Petz. There are 5 leagues.

It is tempting to identify the wooden bridge over the Puzilha with the ancient Maya bridge at the ruins of the same name, but an examination of distances and starting point make that improbable. One must also bear in mind that travelers of that period reported several tree-trunk bridges. Indeed, Delgado mentions a second in the passage given above. San Miguel Manche, starting point of Delgado's itinerary can be located with considerable accuracy thanks to the detailed account by Cano of his *entrada* in 1695 (Ximénez, 1931-33, bk. 5, ch. 58). It lay a few miles southeast of Mopan which, in turn, was situated at or near the site of the modern San Luis.

From Delgado's account we learn that Juan Petz' ranch on the Puzilha was 13 leagues from Manche and 32 or 33 leagues from the mouth of the Yaxal (Moho) River. Delgado's distances are grievously exaggerated, but the exaggeration is probably the same for the various sections of the journey. I think the best guess is that he travelled east from Manche to the upper Puzilha, crossed it, and then followed it southward, recrossed it and reached the home of Juan Petz somewhere about halfway between the site named Puzilha on the Urrutia map of Guatemala and the ruins of Puzilha.

Thence he probably continued southeast, crossing the Conconha (modern Hobente ?) and Latetum (modern Chichikha ?) rivers to reach the Yaxal (Moho) again at the settlement of Vicente Pach, perhaps somewhere near Flour Camp. Another ten leagues took him to the *rancheria* of Martin Petz, presumably somewhere near Meditation Falls, for, as we shall see, Delgado said it was seven leagues from the mouth of the Yaxal (Moho).

In this settlement (of Martín Petz) I found three Spaniards of the Province of Yucatán who spend most of their time in Bacalar or in a town called Tiozucó, near Ascension Bay, whom the English had robbed and they ended up in these forests. They say that they, as well as others in their province, have a good knowledge of this land. They are named Alonso Moreno, Luis Gonzáles and Antonio Mendoza.

These men say that in the Golfo (Dulce) there is a young man called Juan Alonso de Arias who served Captain Don Francisco Sanctos, and that young man knows his way about (these) forests and knows the language and has penetrated as far as the Indians called Mopan, about whom I will speak later. And there are in Bacalar guides and interpreters. They are in Tiozucó or near there and travel to these settlements of which I will treat below. (Here Delgado is clearly writing an intelligence report for the benefit of the Spanish authorities).

The whole of this country from El Manche to this settlement of Martín Petz which is on the bank of the Yaxal (Moho) River I did on foot in four days, and in all these groups of huts there will be twenty to thirty souls, and in many others houses which are quite close, say from one to two leagues, there are many people from whom one could make a notable and large town. That is so because the house with least people will have twenty, thirty or forty souls. There are other houses closer together, some a quarter or a half league apart, others three blocks, others less (still). May God bring them to a knowledge of Him.

I did not visit all these settlements near at hand because the Indians of Cahbon (old spelling of Cajabon) who came with me fell ill. I made a stay in the house of Martín Petz with the Spaniards who told me of the following groups of huts they had visited.

After Martín Petz' *ranchería* there follows towards the north, another group of huts on the other (north) bank (*parte*) of the Yaxal river, a league from here; the Indians called Baten (los Batenos). (Martín Petz' home, we are told below, was 7 leagues from the mouth of the river. Accordingly, as noted above, these settlements presumably are in the neighbourhood of Meditation Falls, and it is from that point that subsequent distances are reckoned). The three houses there are will contain thirty souls.

There is another house half a league from there which will contain ten to twelve souls. It (that is the head of the house) is called Tzununchan. From here to another *ranchería* called Yahcab there are 3 leagues. In this there will be forty to fifty souls all distributed between six to eight houses. There follows 1 league toward the north another (group of huts); its cacique is called Guizquin (Huiskin).

From here one goes to the Pot, perhaps 2 leagues; in the three houses there will be twenty souls. From here to another house which they called Tzak, 1 league, there will be ten souls. From here to house (*sic*) of Joseph Tzak there will be a league; and this contains six houses in which they will be forty to fifty souls.

From here one goes perhaps 2 leagues to another settlement called the Teh (Tehos); in its two houses there will be ten souls. From here perhaps 2 leagues to another *ranchería* called Chucticol (or Chacticol); there are many houses and in them many people, perhaps eighty souls with many children and women. From here follow many *rancherías* which were not visited.

The above indicates a considerable population north of Meditation Falls. The following settlements seem to have been north of the Moho and west of Meditation Falls, suggested approximate position of Martín Petz' settlement

The Spaniards turned westward and found the following *rancherías*: one called Cuche 2 leagues on the return from the trip (described) above; there are perhaps thirty or forty persons. From here to there will be some 4 leagues to a *ranchería* called Chicuy. In this and round about there are two or three caciques called Chicuy, Kin and Tzak, and there will be more than a hundred persons.

They (the Spaniards) returned to the house of Martín Petz and went southward. From here to Timisique there are 8 leagues. They arrived at Timisique where they found many people, and the next day the English (corsair) entered by the river called Tatumha and carried off the Spaniards and some of the Indians; others fled. After many days they released the Spaniards on the bank of the Yaxal river. The latter came to the house of Martín Petz. There are two other houses nearby, one distant half a league, the other three hundred yards. There will be up to forty persons.

We stayed there while we made a canoe to take us to Bacalar. When it was made we put it in the river, the Yaxal (Moho) river then being in flood, for only then is it navigable. It was tied with strong ropes. That first night the river fell and the canoe was left hanging in the air. With the great weight the ropes broke, the canoe went and floated off to sea, the mouth of the river being seven leagues from there, and was lost.

We spent another day looking for a second tree to make a new canoe, and God gave us a ceiba tree, from which in ten days we constructed another fine canoe to make the journey.

In order to inform myself and to get to know the rivers and their mouths, I decided to travel to Bacalar with the Spaniards. Below I will treat of the journey and the rivers they showed me, but now I will say that from this *ranchería* of Martín Petz to the *ranch-*

and that night we lit a fire to warm ourselves and dry our clothes, and that was our ruin, for a league upstream there was an island populated by some English pirates. (So) because it was raining they captured us.

From the above one gathers that Delgado and his party were not following the coast when they were captured, but were returning overland from some point on the Tipu (upper Belize) river below Zauí, and they reached the Tezach (Manatee ?) river eight leagues above its mouth. From the discussion below the Tezach evidently was the Manatee or just possibly the Mullins river. As the English could see their fire from a league away, impossible were the intervening ground covered with vegetation, but understandable if a league of water lay between, I suggest that the English were on the island in Southern Lagoon opposite the mouth of the Manatee or conceivably on one of the long peninsulas jutting into the lagoon, whence they saw Delgado's fire across the water on the strip of land between lagoon and sea. So far as Mullins River is concerned, it is unlikely that there was ever a habitable island in its bed.

After somewhat rough handling, Delgado and his companions were taken to Cocina, present-day St. George's Caye, where the famous - or infamous - Bartholemew Sharpe (Delgado calls him Barte Charpa) treated them in a friendly way and ordered their release. Later, they were put ashore in Espiritu Santo Bay with friendly farewells from the buccaneers, marred only by their taking from Delgado his Manche-Chol boy.

Bartholomew Sharp (or Sharpe) was a famous character of that period. In 1675 he had plundered Segovia (Cabo Gracias a Díos), and in 1680 he was one of the captains of the buccaneer force which with great boldness crossed the isthmus of Panama to raid the Spanish settlements on the Pacific coast (his carefully written logbooks and maps are in the British Museum. After many vicissitudes including deposition from his command - one strange charge to come from his pirate crew was his irreligious attitude - and later re-instatement, he sailed back round Cape Horn. Again in England he was tried for piracy in 1682 but acquitted for lack of evidence. Whether he died in bed or with his seaboots on is not known.

One is glad that Delgado was well treated by that early leader in Belize, for, apart from anything else, he was to make an outstanding contribution to the geography of the country by recording for us the Maya names for most of the rivers from the Moho to the Belize. This information is in the memorandum first quoted and follows on his account of arriving at Zauí and note on the road thence to Tipu.

By sea there are the following rivers toward Bacalar:

From the Yaxal (Moho) river to Cimin (a settlement ?) 1/2 league.

From here to Uchupan river (unidentified, but there is an un-

named stream about a league north of the Moho) 1/2 league.

From here to Paliak river (Rio Grande) 7 leagues.

From here to Puletan river (Middle River) 3 leagues.

From here to the Uakan river (Golden Stream) 1 league.

From here to the river of Uayn (Deep River) 2 leagues.

From here to the river of Campin (Monkey River) 9 leagues.

From here to the Puhuy river (South Stann Creek) 5 leagues.

From here to the river of Soyte (Sittee river) 5 leagues.

From here to the river of Texoc (North Stann Creek ?) 2 leagues.

From here to the river of Texach (elsewhere written Tezach, Manatee river) 3 leagues.

From here to the river of Xibum (Sibun river) 4 leagues.

From here to the river of Balis (Belize river) 2 leagues.

After these two leagues one enters in the river of Tipu. All these rivers on the land side one can wade. Although they appear to be very large and wide, they have at their mouths great sand banks.

The whole document, in Delgado's own hand, is dated in Bacalar September 26th, 1677, and was written as soon as he reached that town after his release by the buccaneers. It is signed, with a *rubrica*, Fray Joseph Delgado. (1)

1. The Jeffery map of 1775 has been of considerable help in the above identifications of Delgado's list of Indian names of rivers. This is not only the earliest good map of the coast of Belize; it is also far and away the best map of the coast produced in the eighteenth century.

Jeffery was the leading British cartographer and clearly used all information he could obtain from both Spanish sources and Baymen; later maps followed him to a very considerable extent. Working northward he has corresponding approximately to the position of the Sarstoon, a river marked Gordo and north of that, the Zacatun. The Zacatun, of course, is a misreading of Zactun, the old name for the Sarstoon, which is frequently mentioned in Spanish sources. Its middle reaches were known as the Maqtol, and its head waters as the Tiyn.

According to Ximénez, (1931-33, bk. 5, ch. 58) the headwaters lie nine leagues from Cajabon, and, indeed, the Sarstoon does rise near Cajabon. As to the Rio Gordo, I think this must have been a second name for the Sarstoon in the eighteenth century, and Jeffery's sources were conflicting (he used maps captured from the Spaniards in the war of 1740).

Jeffery, like all other cartographers of the eighteenth century, omits the Temax, although that name was in use in the seventeenth century. He also omits the Yaxal, the present-day Moho.

Jeffery has the Palacca or Peliack entering the sea just below Seven

Hills, also marked on the map. The bay there is called Palacca Bay and islands near the mouth are labelled Cayos de Palacca, and must correspond to Moho and Mangrove Cays. Accordingly, there can be no doubt that the Palacca, more correctly the Paliack (p. 27), is the old name for the Rio Grande. The map used in the treaty of 1783 marks a Little Palacca river and a Great Palacca river. The Danville map of 1794 spells it Paliack.

The next river on the Jeffery map moving northward is the Scarraskam reaching the sea immediately below Seven Hills; it must be Seven Hills Creek. The name, as we shall see, is that of the great mountain god of the Chol of that part.

The Puletan, Uakan and Uaym (crocodile) rivers said by Delgado to be three, four, and five leagues respectively beyond (north of) the Paliack and with the last nine leagues short (south) of the Campin, which, as already noted, is almost surely Monkey River, do not appear under those names on any map. The best identifications, allowing for the exaggerated distances and remembering that off-shore winds and currents would affect computations, for distances were surely reckoned on time consumed, are respectively Middle River, Golden Stream and Deep River.

Offshore breezes, such as Dávila encountered (p. 9), might well lead to rivers not being sighted, and their consequent omission from the list. Jeffery marks South Monkey River just north of Seven Hills, which would indicate it was Middle River or Golden Stream, but he omits the real Monkey River.

The Spanish historian, Villagutierre y Sotomayor, (1933, bk. 3 ch. 2) mentions the settlement of Uacan, together with those of Temax, Paliac and Campin, as places Delgado, with his superior R. P. Francisco Gallegos, tried unsuccessfully to visit the preceding year of 1676.

The Pubuy, halfway between the Campin (Monkey River) and the Soyte (Sittee) according to Delgado, should be somewhere in the vicinity of Waha Leaf Creek, but as that is a stream of scant importance, it is possible that Delgado got his distances mixed and the Pubuy (it is the name of a night bird) was the Maya name for South Stann Creek.

The Soyte is, of course, the modern Sittee. Xoyte, the correct spelling given in some sources, means eyelid sty. The xoy shrub is used as a cure in Yucatán.

The Texoc, according to Delgado, should be a little closer to the Sittee than to the Tezach, which we have seen is very probably Manatee River. It should accordingly be the North Stann Creek, with Mullins River as the alternative. The name probably means at the place of the shark.

The Xibum survives as the modern Sibun River. Xibum probably means male bird.

The Baliz, of course, is Belize River. Tipu is another name for the Belize River, although the name was applied rather to its upper reaches. Delgado never saw the mouth of the Belize River, for he had been taken prisoner from the mouth of the Tezach directly to St. George's Caye. He appears to have misunderstood his informant, setting down independent statements that the Belize was two leagues beyond the Sibun and that the Tipu was two leagues beyond the Sibun without realizing, or at least noting, that they were one and the same river. Beliz in Yucatec Maya signifies muddy or muddy water, an appropriate name for this river in flood.

The identifications of the rivers given by Delgado with modern names as given by Doris Stone (1932) differ widely from those offered here. Hers were largely influenced by the map the antiquarian Juan Gavarrete published (in 1879 ?), on which were marked a number of places and names of rivers which occur in Delgado's writings, but which had disappeared or ceased to be used when the map was compiled.

Gavarrete, having earlier transcribed Ximénez' original manuscript of his great Historia, was well acquainted with Delgado's lists of places and rivers which appear in that work. It is, therefore, extremely likely that he incorporated that material in his map. Note that Ximénez gives Zimin instead of Cimin; Gavarrete has Zumin. Unfortunately, his guesses are not good. He gets off to a bad start by identifying his Zumin with Golden Stream, although Cimin was said by Delgado to have been only a half league from the Yaxal (Moho), and as alone it is not called a river, it was probably a settlement. Doris Stone's reliance on Gavarrete's material had unfortunate results.

After submitting this paper for publication I found that I had overlooked Sapper's study on the Manche Chol (1936) in which he also attempts to identify the rivers in Delgado's account. As his identifications vary from those given above, I summarize those he gives, together with those of Stone and myself:

(Please see Table on following Page.)

Modern Name	Stone	Sapper	Thompson
Mobo	Yaxba	Yaxba	Yaxba
Unnamed Creek	--	--	Uchupam
Rio Grande	--	Palisk	Palisk
Joe Taylor Creek	Uchupam	--	--
Middle River	--	--	--
Golden Stream	--	Puletan	Puletan <i>Puletan</i>
Deep River	Palisk	Uakan	Uain
Monkey River	Puletan	Uain	Campin
Sennis River	Uain	--	--
South Stamm Creek	Campin	Campin	Pubuy
Sitlee	Soyle	Pubuy	Soyle
North Stamm Creek	Pubuy	--	Texoc?
Mullins River	Texoc	Texoc	Texoc??
Manatee	Tezach	Tezach	Tezach
Sibun	Xibum	Xibum	Xibum
Belize	Baliz	Baliz	Baliz
Belize (Haulover)	--	--	Tipu
Hondo	Tipu	Tipu	Nobukam

Sapper identifies the Tutuilba with the Temash. It may have been another name for that river, for it is called Temax in early sources, but one may equally well suppose it was another name for the Sarstoon, usually called Zaciun in early sources. Tutuilba signifies Shell River in Manche Chol. Certainly, both Stone and Sapper are wrong in identifying the Tipu with the Hondo. Tipu is incontestably the Belize River. Delgado was probably confused by the two mouths of the river, applying Baliz to the town branch (not, of course, then canalized) and Tipu to the Haulover branch.

In all probability the Manche-Chol were of the same stock as the builders of the chain of great Maya sites extending across the base of the Peninsula of Yucatán from the Tabasco delta-land to the Golfo Dulce and even beyond to Quirigua and Copan, yet, at the time of which we are writing, their greatness had departed. They lived in small scattered settlements (Delgado's *rancheria*) lacking any political cohesion — each petty chief of a few thatched huts owing allegiance to no man.

In place of the pyramid-supported stone temple of the ancient ceremonial centers, the so-called cities, a thatched house served as a temple in the more populated settlements. Seemingly this could have a sort of portico with wooden pillars.

Idols were chiefly of pottery. Probably these were tall vases for burning incense with a figure of a god in relief on the front, the vessel serving both as an incense burner and as an idol. The principal deities were personification of nature, notably mountains, dangerous passes, rivers, whirlpools, and crossroads. One such mountain god dwelled on a mountain top just north of the Sarstoon river, somewhere near Gracias a Dios Falls. He was of outstanding importance. At the summit there was a small carefully swept square with surrounding palisade. In the centre a fire burned perpetually. Here the Indians, who held both mountain and god in great fear and reverence, burned copal. The deity was called Escarruchan or Xcarruchan.

We have already noted that in the Jeffery map a stream, almost surely Seven Hills Creek, is labelled Scarraskam. As there is a local shift from a to u, and as an initial Maya x often becomes English s (e.g. Xibum - Sibum) there appears to be little doubt that this stream was named for that same mountain deity, and in that connection it is important that the Seven Hills are conspicuous on that otherwise rather flat coast, and for that reason may have come to be identified with that most important deity. Furthermore, the name is confirmatory evidence that Manche Chol inhabited that part of the coast (note also that the chiefs of Campin and Saka (Saca?) were called Yahcab, a Manche Chol surname).

In connection with this cult of mountain gods who were also gods of rain and of the earth, it is significant that a Chol-Manche vocabulary gives as the translation of "idol" the term Mam a name for mountain gods still

current among the Mopan Maya of San Antonio, Toledo. The god of death and the underworld was Cizin, a name found all over the Maya lowlands.

Blood drawn from various parts of one's own body, turkeys, black wax, copal incense, and pine torches were the principal offerings; maize dishes surely should be added to the list although not mentioned in early sources. As we have seen, persons were sacrificed, although there is no evidence that the practice was common.

As among all Maya groups, maize was the principal food of the Manche Chol, but the now almost universal tortilla was not eaten. Instead, maize was largely consumed in liquid forms, such as posole, and probably was eaten as tamales. Other important foods were beans, chile, sweet potatoes, turkeys, plantains and sugar cane, the last two introduced from the Old World. Both cacao and annatto were cultivated on a large scale.

Manche Chol men normally wore breech clouts, but one padre reported meeting six men completely naked, and the men of Campin seem to have had the same custom, for the Franciscan who visited them in 1641 took them pieces of cloth to cover their private parts. Women wore cotton skirts, and in some cases covered head and breasts with a white cloth. Men wore their hair long; the cutting of it, insisted on by the padres on conversion to Christianity, was a source of great mortification to the Indians.

Polygamy was common. Certain Manche Chol from the Peten who had been moved to the Guatemalan highlands, were reported to have died of lovelornness and vexation on being deprived of all but one wife.

Like other Maya groups, the Manche Chol used a year of 365 days (but no leap-day) divided into eighteen months of twenty days each plus an unlucky five-day period at the end of the year. Certainly, they must also have had a 260-day sacred almanac employed largely for divination and ceremonies.

As already noted, no Manche Chol survive anywhere in Belize or adjacent southeastern Peten; their place has been taken in the southwest of the Toledo District by immigrant Mopan Maya and Kekchi Maya. The latter have expanded enormously in the past three centuries, absorbing many former Manche Chol communities in the Alta Verapaz, and then advancing to the Usumacinta, Cancuen and Sarstoon Rivers, and finally crossing into the Toledo District late in the nineteenth century.

This story of the Maya of Belize derives from the writing of Spaniards whose way of life and outlook differed widely from those of the Maya, whom, neither understanding nor having any wish to do so, they sought to incorporate, but as an inferior race, into their culture. Yet, the Maya view, so poorly reported, comes through, albeit dimly. Victims of aggression, they desired only to live in peace and liberty, free of subjection to the world of imperial Spain, and free to cultivate without harassment the

soil they so loved.

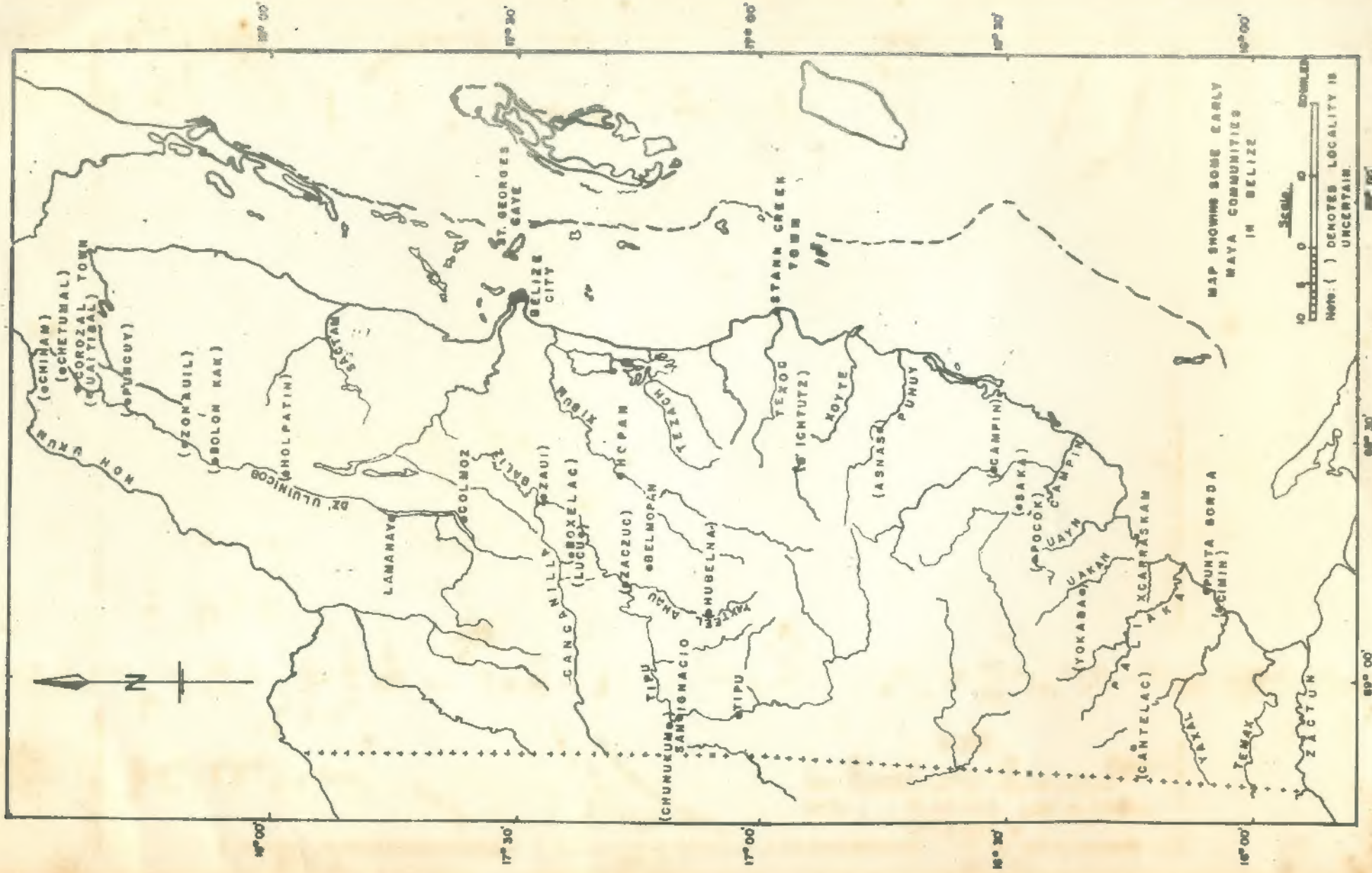
The missionaries, good and worthy men, sought to save the souls of those they regarded as benighted heathen, but unwittingly killed them body and soul by exposing them, particularly by concentrating them in towns, to diseases of the Old World, to which the Maya had built up no resistance. Malaria, hookworm, smallpox and yellow fever were the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse who rode forth to the slaughter. The defensive tactics of the Maya of Belize to retire deeper into the forest served against the Spaniards but failed against the onslaughts of disease.

Unhappily, with the rigid attitudes of seventeenth and eighteenth century Spain, it occurred to no one to question the view, then generally held, that one could not "pack and label men for God" without also subjecting them to vexatious political oppression; state and church were inseparable. By their efforts to preserve their way of life and resist alien rule, the Maya of Belize were proclaiming three centuries ago the right of small nations to live free of interference from others.

REFERENCES

- BUNTING, E.J.
1932 From Cahabon to Bacalar in 1677. *Maya Society Quarterly*, 1:112-19. Baltimore.
- DELGADO, J.
1677 Memoria de los parajes y ríos que ay desde el pueblo de San Miguel Manche hasta los indios Ahizaes, el camino y indios. Ms. in the Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris.
1703? Viage de Bacalar, y encuentro de los de Bacalar, los nombres estan en el derrotero que di a V.P.M.R., el de la canoa se llama Alonso Moreno. Ms. in Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris.
- FOWLER, H.
1879 A narrative of a journey across the unexplored portion of British Honduras with a short sketch of the history and resources of the colony. Belize.
- GANN, T.W.F.
1900 Mounds in northern Honduras. *U.S. Bureau of American Ethnology, 19th Annual Report*, pt. 2, pp. 655-92. Washington.
- HENDERSON, G.
1809 An account of the British settlement of Honduras. London.
- LOPEZ COGOLLUDO, D.
1867-68 Historia de Yucatán. Merida. First edition, Madrid 1688.
- MAPS
1768 Plano de la Provincia de Yucatán . . .dibujado en Campeche

- ...1766 por D. J. de Díos González. Madrid.
- 1775 Thomas Jeffery's West India atlas. London.
- 1787 A map of a part of Yucatán. . . . allotted to Great Britain for the cutting of logwood. . . . By a Bay-man. London.
- 1794 A new and complete map of the West Indies. . . . by Monsr. Danville; with several emendations and improvements. London.
- OVIEDO Y VALDES, G. FERNANDEZ de
1851-55 Historia general y natural de las Indias, islas y tierra-firme del mar océano. 4 vols. Madrid (written 1530's)
- REMESAL, A. de
1932 Historia general de las Indias occidentales y particular de la gobernación de Chiapa y Guatemala. 2 vols. Guatemala (1st edition, 1619)
- SAPPER, K.
1936 Die Verapaz im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert. *Abhandlungen der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 37: 1-46. Munich.
- SCHOLES, F.V. and R.L. ROYS
1948 The Maya Chontal Indians of Acalan-Tixchel, a contribution to the history and ethnography of the Yucatán Peninsula. *Carnegie Institution of Washington Publication* 560. Washington.
- STONE, D.Z.
1932 Some Spanish entradas, 1524-1695. *Middle America Research Institute, Tulane University, Pub.* 4, pp. 209-96. New Orleans.
- TIPU, MATRICULA DEL PUEBLO DE
1655 From Probanza de Francisco Pérez. A.G.I., Mexico. Transcript by F.V. Scholes.
- VASQUEZ, F.
1937-44 Crónica de la provincia del Santísimo Nombre de Jesús de Guatemala de la Orden de Nuestro Seráfico Padre San Francisco. 4 vols. Guatemala (1st edition, 1714-16)
- VILLAGUTIERRE Y SOTO-MAYOR, J. de
1933 Historia de la conquista de la provincia de el Itza, reducción y progresos de la de el Lacandón. Guatemala (1st edition, Madrid, 1701)
- XIMENEZ, F.
1929-31 Historia de la Provincia de San Vicente de Chiapa y Guatemala de la Orden de Predicadores. Guatemala (completed c. 1721).



MAP SHOWING SOME EARLY
MAYA COMMUNITIES
IN BELIZE

10 0 10 MILES
Note: () DENOTES LOCALITY IS
UNCERTAIN